

**UNIT OVERVIEW**

Unit Length	7 hour long lessons (or 14 half-hour lessons)
Grade Level(s)/ Subject(s)	4th - 6th/English Language Arts
Unit Overview	<p>This unit introduces students to the roots of American music through the study of music traditions that enslaved people carried to the colonies from Africa. Students should end the unit with an understanding of the ways in which the traditions of enslaved people have influenced American music as well as an awareness of the overall genius, perseverance and joy of Black musicians.</p> <p>Teachers should read <a href="#">“American Popular Music” by Wesley Morris</a> and listen to <a href="#">Episode 3 of the “1619” podcast</a> prior to teaching this unit to students in order to build a strong understanding of the themes and material.</p> <p>Prior to engaging in the unit, the teacher must ensure that students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Feel safe and encouraged to participate in collaborative discussion</li> <li>● Have a basic understanding of slavery in the colonies and the United States</li> <li>● Have been introduced to main/central idea, key details, and theme/message</li> </ul>
Objectives & Outcomes	<p>This lesson was planned using Dr. Gholdy Muhammad’s HILL Model, an equity framework which focuses on 5 pursuits:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Identities:</b> <i>How will your teaching help students to learn something about themselves and/or others?</i></li> <li>2. <b>Skills:</b> <i>What skills and content learning standards are you teaching?</i></li> <li>3. <b>Intellect:</b> <i>What will your students become smarter about?</i></li> <li>4. <b>Criticality:</b> <i>How will you engage your thinking about power, equity, and anti-oppression in the text, in society and in the world?</i></li> <li>5. <b>Joy:</b> <i>How will my instruction advance students’ happiness through the use of beautiful and truthful images, representations and narratives about themselves and/or others?</i></li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>HILL Model Outline of Unit</u></p> <p><b>Identity:</b> Students will consider how the music and songs of enslaved people influence the music they listen to today.</p> <p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Annotating texts, making inferences, using textual evidence to support responses, determining the main/central idea, effectively participating in collaborative discussion, making connections across texts</li> </ul> <p><b>Intellect:</b> Students will learn about the traditional music and songs created by enslaved people and how they influence popular music today.</p> <p><b>Criticality:</b> Students will learn how enslaved people used music as a form of resistance and an expression of freedom.</p> <p><b>Joy:</b> Students will see examples of joy expressed through music and song</p>

## Rooted in Song

Unit by Educators in LAUSD’s HEET Community of Schools,  
part of the 2021 cohort of *The 1619 Project* Education Network

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Standards	<p><a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1</a> Students will participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p> <p><a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1</a> Students will determine what the text says explicitly and make logical inferences from it and cite specific textual evidence when writing to support conclusions drawn from the text.</p> <p><a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2</a> Students will determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.</p> <p><a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.4</a> Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.</p> <p><a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4</a> Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</p>
Unit Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">“American Popular Music” by Wesley Morris</a></li><li>• <a href="#">1619 Podcast - Episode 3: The Birth of American Music</a></li><li>• Excerpts from <a href="#">“The Idea of America” by Nikole Hannah-Jones</a> and <a href="#">“Creating a Culture: The Music of Enslaved People” by Rebecca Bodenheimer</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Excerpt from Biva Africa’s African Musical Documentary</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Pharell Williams “Happy” Music Video</a></li><li>• <a href="#">“Singing in Slavery: Songs of Survival, Songs of Freedom” by Kenyatta D. Berry</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Balm in Gilead Recording - Fisk Jubilee Quartet</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Balm in Gilead Performance - Kanye Sunday Service Choir</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Wade in the Water Performance - Fisk Jubilee Singers</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Wade in the Water Performance - The Spirituals Choir</a></li><li>• <a href="#">PBS “20th Century Music” History Detectives article</a></li><li>• Teacher-created Daily Instructional Packets</li></ul>
Performance Task(s)	At the end of the unit, students will create a short presentation to explain how a musical artist or song they like has been influenced by the musical traditions and culture created by enslaved people.
Assessment/ Evaluation	<p>Student presentations are graded with a classroom rubric.</p> <p>In addition to the performance task, students are expected to annotate each text and respond to a set of text dependent questions for each text. Each lesson includes an exit ticket to assess students on their understanding of the lesson content and their progress in using textual evidence to support their responses.</p>

**DAILY LESSONS AND RESOURCES**

Day 1: Introduction to the Unit Concepts & Themes

**Lesson Materials & Resources**

- Chart paper and markers
- Technology to share audio and video
- [Day 1 Lesson Materials \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Day 1 Lesson Materials \[.docx\]](#)
- [Day 1 Music Selections \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Day 1 Music Selections \[.pptx\]](#)
  - Each selection is 1 - 2 minutes in length. Selections are provided or educators can choose to select songs that they know will resonate with students

**Lesson Activities**

Key Vocabulary and Concepts:

- **Culture** - Culture is a pattern of behavior shared by a society, or group of people. Many different things make up a society’s culture. These things include food, language, clothing, tools, music, arts, customs, beliefs, and religion. (Definition provided by [Britannica Kids](#))
- **Influence** - When someone or something affects or changes another
- **Enslaved** - An enslaved person is someone who is forced to work for someone else without pay and/or rights.

Student Spark:

Play each of the music selections for students. After each selection, ask students:

- *How does this song make you feel?*
- *What do you hear?*
- *What do you know about this song?*
- *What else do you want to share about this song?*
- *Did you notice any similarities or differences between the songs?*

Students can share their responses aloud or use the graphic organizer in the Day 1 Lesson Materials packet to write them out. After students share their responses, ask:

*Do you think these song clips are examples of American music? Why or why not?*

Allow students the opportunity to share their thoughts and to respond to the thoughts of others.

Lesson Steps:

1. Explain to students that they will discover how much of the music we hear today is influenced by the

music and songs of enslaved and free Black people. We will explore music from hundreds of years ago through listening, reading, and writing.

2. Explain unit vocabulary and concepts

3. **Review unit intro document**

Read the excerpt from Nikole Hannah-Jones' essay and review the image on the document. Questions to spark discussion may include:

- *According to the text, when did enslaved Africans first arrive at the Virginia colony?*
- *How did enslaved Africans arrive in Jamestown, VA?*
- *Where did the first enslaved Africans come from?*
- *What questions or thoughts do you have?*

4. Explain to students that the enslaved Africans who were forcibly removed from their homes had their own cultures and they brought that with them when they arrived in the colonies. That culture included music and singing. Say, *"Let's think about the culture of music in America now. What types of music do you listen to? What instruments are popular?"*

5. Make a chart titled American Music Culture and have students list examples of American music culture. Remind students that our country has people from all over the world so there are no wrong answers. Post the chart in the room as a reference for the remainder of the unit.

Closing:

After creating the chart, listen to the music selections from the lesson opener and ask students to identify any similarities between the selections and the details listed on the class chart. Inform students that they will continue to consider the influences that early music has on music today as they progress through the unit.

Assessment:

There is no formal assessment for this lesson. However, students should be able to interpret and use the key vocabulary with ease as they will use those concepts throughout the unit.

Day 2: Traditional African Instruments and Music

Lesson Material & Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Chart paper and markers</li> <li>● Technology to share audio and video</li> <li>● <a href="#">Day 2 Lesson Materials [.pdf]</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Day 2 Lesson Materials [.docx]</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Excerpt from Biva Africa’s African Musical Documentary</a> - Suggested excerpt:4:30 - 22:43 <i>This documentary is 45 minutes long and shows viewers how several traditional instruments are made by an artisan in Uganda. The suggested clip shows how a large drum is made.</i></li> </ul>
Lesson Activities
<p><u>Key Vocabulary and Concepts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Banjo</b> - a stringed instrument modeled after West African instruments</li> <li>● <b>Talking Drums</b> - Drums that were used to communicate</li> <li>● <b>Revolt</b> - a rebellion</li> <li>● <b>Outlaw</b> - to make something illegal</li> </ul> <p><u>Student Spark:</u> Show students the image of a djembe (pronounced JEM-beh) drum in the materials packet or bring a djembe to class to show students. Ask students: <i>What is the name of this instrument? What do you know about this instrument? How would you describe the sound this instrument makes?</i></p> <p>After students answer. Explain to them that it is a type of drum called a djembe (pronounced JEM-beh) and it was created in West Africa some 600-800 years ago. The drum was a very important part of many African cultures and many enslaved people carried the memories of that drum with them when they were forced from their land.</p> <p>Refer students to the class chart created on Day 1 to see if drums or something similar was included. Explain to students that today they will learn about the instruments that are common in various parts of Africa. Remind students that Africa is a continent with 54 countries so what may be common in one community may not be common in another.</p> <p><u>Lesson Steps:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduce students to the annotation guides in the packet or review an annotation chart that has already been established in the classroom. Inform students that they will use those annotations throughout the unit. Encourage students to use the Connection symbol as they come across connections across texts (text-to-text) and connections to the music they listen to now (text-to-self and text-to-world).</li> <li>2. <b>First Read of Text: “Creating a Culture: The Music of Enslaved People” by Rebecca</b></li> </ol>

**Bodenheimer**

Instruct students to read and annotate the text independently. Read aloud to the students that may need additional support. After students read, ask students to share what the text is mainly about.

3. **Second Read of Text: “Creating a Culture: The Music of Enslaved People” by Rebecca Bodenheimer**

Reread the text. You can choose to read the text aloud for the class, assign students to read with pre-selected partners or instruct students to read independently. Make the choice that best fits the needs of your learners. Lead the students in adding to their annotations. Encourage students to share their questions and connections after reading. Point out key connections that align with the focus of the unit.

4. **Text Dependent Questions**

Guide students in answering the questions using textual evidence.

5. **Video Excerpt**

Show students the video excerpt and encourage them to jot down their thoughts using the A-E-I-O-U strategy as they watch. Students can jot their thoughts on the graphic organizer provided, or, students can jot their thoughts on sticky notes to be posted on a shared class A-E-I-O-U poster.

Closing:

Make a chart titled Music Traditions of Enslaved People and ask students to list examples of African music culture that enslaved people carried with them. Post the chart in the room as a reference for the remainder of the unit. Explain to students that tomorrow they will learn how the African traditions thrived amongst enslaved people in the colonies.

Assessment:

One question Exit Ticket that requires students to state evidence to support their answer:

*Enslaved Africans carried their traditions with them when they were brought to the colonies. Describe one way that African musical traditions have influenced the music we hear in America today. Use evidence from the article and/or the video to support your response.*

Day 3: Musical Traditions of Enslaved Black People

Lesson Materials & Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Chart paper and markers</li> <li>● Technology to share audio and video</li> <li>● Unit Posters</li> <li>● <a href="#">Day 3 Music Selections [.pptx]</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Day 3 Music Selections [.pdf]</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Day 3 Lesson Materials [.pdf]</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Day 3 Lesson Materials [.docx]</a></li> </ul>
Lesson Activities
<p><u>Key Vocabulary and Concepts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Calls</b> - Songs sung by the enslaved to communicate messages</li> <li>● <b>Hollers</b> - Individual songs about personal feelings sung by the enslaved as they worked</li> <li>● <b>Spirituals</b> - Religious songs created by the enslaved which told of their trials and their perseverance</li> <li>● <b>Call and Response</b> - Group songs where the singer sings a line and the group responds</li> </ul> <p><u>Student Spark:</u></p> <p>Lead students through a few common call-and-response activities used in the classroom. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “1, 2, 3, eyes on me” - “1, 2, eyes on you”</li> <li>● “If you can hear me clap once”</li> <li>● “Class, class” - “Yes, yes”</li> <li>● Clap a rhythm and the students mimic that rhythm</li> </ul> <p>Explain to students that those activities are called “call and response” because the teacher makes the call and the class responds. Call and response is one of the traditions enslaved people brought with them from Africa. Add “call and response” to the Music Traditions of Enslaved People chart.</p> <p>Explain to students that today they will learn about some of the song traditions that were an important part of African culture and the song traditions that enslaved people created.</p> <p><u>Lesson Steps:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review the annotation chart. Encourage students to use the Connection symbol as they come across connections across texts (text-to-text) and connections to the music they listen to now (text-to-self and text-to-world).</li> <li>2. <b>First Read of Text: Excerpt from “Creating a Culture: The Music of Enslaved People”</b> Instruct students to read and annotate the text independently. Read aloud to the students that may need additional support. After students read, ask students to share what the text is mainly about and</li> </ol>

how it connects to yesterday’s reading.

3. **Second Read of Text: Excerpt from “Creating a Culture: The Music of Enslaved People”**  
Reread the text. You can choose to read the text aloud for the class, assign students to read with pre-selected partners or instruct students to read independently. Make the choice that best fits the needs of your learners. Lead the students in adding to their annotations. Encourage students to share their questions and connections after reading. Point out key connections that align with the focus of the unit.
4. **Text Dependent Questions**  
Guide students in answering the questions below the text using textual evidence.
5. **Music Choice Board Exploration**  
Lead students through your selected music clips on a music choice board, allow them to discover the board with partners, or instruct students to interact with the board independently.

Closing:

Explain to students that they have spent the last few days discovering the African music traditions that the enslaved people carried with them. Tomorrow, they will begin to discover the music traditions created by the enslaved people.

Assessment:

One question Exit Ticket that requires students to state evidence to support their answer:

*How did enslaved people use music as a form of resistance? How did they use music to express joy? Use evidence from any of the texts and/or videos we have discovered this week to support your response.*



Day 4: Black American Spirituals

Lesson Materials & Resources

- Technology to share audio and video. (optional use of 1 to 1 student devices)
- [Day 4 Lesson Materials \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Day 4 Lesson Materials \[.docx\]](#)
- [Day 4 Negro Spiritual Selections \[.pptx\]](#)
- [Day 4 Negro Spiritual Selections \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Pharell Williams “Happy” Music Video](#)

Learning Activities

Key Vocabulary and Concepts:

- **Contraband** - During the Civil War, enslaved people who escaped to the Union were called ‘contraband’.
- **Spirituals** - Religious songs created by the enslaved which told of their trials and their perseverance

Student Spark:

Say to students, “*We are going to watch a music video. As you watch the video, think about the message the song is communicating. How does the song express emotions?*”

Play the Pharell Williams “Happy” music video, then allow students to share their responses to the questions.

Explain to students that today they will learn more information about spirituals and how enslaved people used them to express emotions and deliver messages.

Lesson Steps:

**1. Interactive Read Aloud of Article: “Singing in Slavery: Songs of Survival, Songs of Freedom” by Kenyatta D. Berry**

Display the text and read it aloud to students, stopping to interact with students and further explain certain portions. Prompt students to ask and answer questions as you read and encourage students to make connections to prior knowledge. Questions/Comments to spark discussion may include:

- *This article uses the word ‘contraband’. During the Civil War, enslaved people who escaped to the Union were called ‘contraband’. The Civil War occurred from 1861-1865, which was over 240 years after the first enslaved Africans arrived in Virginia Colony. The Civil War resulted in the creation of constitutional amendments that ended slavery in the United States*
- *Songs were passed down from generation to generation, this means it was a part of the cultures of people who were enslaved, and the cultures of their descendants. Do you know any songs that have been passed down in your family?*
- *Why is Wade in the Water considered a song of freedom?*

**2. Spiritual Lyrics Analysis**

Provide students with copies of the lyrics to “Balm in Gilead” and “Wade in the Water”. Read the lyrics with students and give them the opportunity to find evidence of sorrow, joy, inspiration and hope. Allow students to share their thoughts and feelings about the lyrics.

**3. Spiritual Listening Session**

Play the sample songs for students in the order provided above in the lesson plan, highlighting the fact that these songs are over 100 years old and are still sung today. Allow students to share their thoughts, feelings and connections about the performances.

Closing:

Explain to students that spirituals are still sung today and they have influenced much of the music we hear. Tomorrow, we will discover those influences.

Assessment:

One question Exit Ticket that requires students to state evidence to support their answer:

*In today’s reading, the author said that music was a way for enslaved people to express their feelings, “whether it was sorrow, joy, inspiration or hope”. Provide an example from Balm of Gilead and an example from Wade in the Water that displays sorrow, joy, inspiration and/or hope.*

Day 5: Black American Influences on Modern Music Genres

Lesson Materials & Resources

- Technology to share audio and video. (optional use of 1 to 1 student devices)
- Unit Posters created in lessons 1 and 2
- [Day 5 Music Selections \[.pptx\]](#)
- [Day 5 Music Selections \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Day 5 Lesson Materials \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Day 5 Lesson Materials \[.docx\]](#)

Learning Activities

Key Vocabulary and Concepts:

- **Influence** - When someone or something affects or changes another
- **Blues music** - A music genre derived from spirituals and work songs developed by Black Americans in the late 19th century
- **Jazz music** - A music genre inspired by African rhythms that was developed by Black Americans in the late 19th century
- **Rock and Roll music** - A music genre inspired by jazz, rhythm & blues, gospel, hillbilly music that was developed in the 1950s.
- **Hip Hop** - A cultural movement started in the 1970s that includes music derived from blues, jazz, and African rhythms. It also includes rapping, which is derived from West African griots, poetry and other influences.

Student Spark:

Review the posters that were created earlier in the week.

Ask students: *Is there anything we should add to either of these charts? What do you notice about the information on the charts? What do you wonder? What connections do you notice between the charts?*

Explain to students that today they will learn more about how the traditional music and song of enslaved people influence the music of today.

Lesson Steps:

1. Review the annotation chart. Encourage students to use the Connection symbol as they come across connections across texts (text-to-text) and connections to the music they listen to now (text-to-self and text-to-world).
2. **First Read of Text**  

*\*Select the PBS “20th Century Music” article or the “Influences in American Music” worksheet\**

Instruct students to read and annotate the text independently. Read aloud to the students that may need additional support. After students read, ask students to share what the text is mainly about and how it connects to the information they’ve learned in the unit thus far.

**3. Second Read of Text**

Reread the text. You can choose to read the text aloud for the class, assign students to read with pre-selected partners or instruct students to read independently. Make the choice that best fits the needs of your learners. Lead the students in adding to their annotations. Encourage students to share their questions and connections after reading. Point out key connections that align with the focus of the unit.

**4. Music Selection Exploration**

Lead students through your selected music clips on a music choice board, allow them to discover the board with partners, or instruct students to interact with the board independently.

Closing:

Explain to students that the music history of enslaved people and their descendants is vast and they have only discovered a small fraction of it. Encourage students to continually consider the influences of enslaved people’s music and experiences when they listen to music.

Assessment:

One question Exit Ticket that requires students to state evidence to support their answer:

*How has the music we hear today been influenced by the musical traditions of enslaved people? Use evidence from any of the texts and/or videos we have discovered to support your response.*

Days 6 - 7: Student Performance Tasks

Lesson Materials & Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Technology to share audio and video. (optional use of 1 to 1 student devices)</li><li>• Unit Posters</li><li>• All texts and resources used throughout the unit</li><li>• <a href="#">Sample End of Unit Presentation [.pptx]</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Sample End of Unit Presentation [.pdf]</a></li></ul>
Learning Activities
<p><u>Key Vocabulary and Concepts:</u> All key vocabulary and concepts in unit</p> <p><u>Student Spark:</u> Review the posters that were created earlier in the week. Say to students, <i>“We’ve been learning about the influence that the music and song traditions of enslaved people have on today’s music. Today, we will work on/present a project to show what we have learned.”</i></p> <p><u>End-of-unit Task:</u> Students complete a Google Slide or a poster to show what they have learned. The presentation must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The name of a musical artist or song that has been influenced by the musical traditions of enslaved people</li><li>• A clip of the artists music or selected song</li><li>• A brief description of the influence, using evidence from the unit’s texts and/or videos</li></ul> <p><u>End-of-unit Presentation:</u> Students present their tasks to the class. If possible, invite families to join virtually and engage in discussion about the unit content. After the presentations, take the time as a class to reflect on the following questions:</p> <p><i>Why do you think the music traditions we discovered have been passed down for so long?</i> <i>Why do those traditions have so much influence?</i> <i>How have the music traditions we learned about affected your life?</i></p>